

# *The Character Quarterly*

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## *Service Before Self*

### *Spring BreakOUT!*

(Not A Break From Normal  
Midshipmen Behavior).....2

Three Days of  
History and Tradition.....3

Another Fine Mess.....4

'51 - '01:  
Another Link In The Chain.....5

Grassroots Leadership at USNA.....6

A Trip To Colorado Springs.....7

Friends For Life.....8

*"If there be any truer  
measure of a man  
than by what he does,  
it must be  
by what he gives."*

*~ ROBERT SOUTH ~*



## ***Spring BreakOUT !!*** **(Not A Break From Normal** **Midshipmen Behavior)**

*by MIDN Hannah Martin, '02*



**S**omebody had a good idea. Of course, people have good ideas all the time, but this good idea was different – it became a reality.

MIDN 2/C Brian Ray had wanted to volunteer his time and efforts to the Midshipmen Action Group (MAG), the Naval Academy's premier community service organization, but he simply had difficulty making time during the academic year. However, he didn't have plans for Spring Break in March 2001 and thought it would be a great opportunity to use his time to serve others.

MIDN Ray approached the MAG with his idea of a midshipmen-sponsored volunteer trip during Spring Break. A meeting was called for all interested members of the Brigade and the response was overwhelming. In fact, so many midshipmen were excited about the proposal that the initial concept of one

trip was quickly eliminated. *Four* trips were planned and carried out with over 45 midshipmen involved. Officers accompanied the midshipmen on three of the four trips, but everything was organized and executed by the midshipmen.

One group of 10 midshipmen, under the leadership of MIDN 2/C Andrew Winberry, went to the Everglades National Park in Florida, where they volunteered their time cleaning beaches and building canoe trails. A second group, under the leadership of MIDN 1/C Christy

McCutchan, traveled to the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and helped restore a historic park ranch, deconstruct an old ski lodge, and build a rock retaining wall. Yet another group visited Reynosa, Mexico, where they helped to build houses in an area desperate for decent living structures (the pictures on this page highlight some of the images of this trip). The fourth group, under the leadership of MIDN 3/C Nick Keller, went to the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation in South



Dakota, where they assisted with the Parole Rotary's 'Project BIG (Books for International Goodwill).'

Mr. Craig Cowan (USNA '78) of USPA & IRA and Lockheed Martin contributed considerable financial donations to assist in funding the trips, but the midshipmen who participated paid a large portion of their own costs. Not only did these midshipmen selflessly give up their Spring Breaks in order to volunteer their efforts to help others, but they paid to do it!

Strange, you think? No – it's just a normal occurrence at USNA, where public service is a large part of a midshipman's Naval Academy experience. Next year the MAG is hoping to *expand* the Spring BreakOUT program, so break out your calendars and reserve March 2002 as community service with the MAG.



*The Midshipmen Action Group in Reynosa, Mexico*

## Three Days of History and Tradition

by MIDN Alpa Patel, '02

Tradition is a word synonymous with the United States Naval Academy. From the uniforms to the chow calls heard within the granite walls of Mother B, history has a lasting impact on this institution and the way it is run. Fittingly, it was no wonder that on March 27, 2001, the history and traditions of the Undersea Warfare community were displayed on the Yard. The Naval Forces Under the Sea Symposium was a three-day event that brought to the Academy presentations and demonstrations from a truly select group of members in the Submarine, Special Operations, and Special Warfare communities. The symposium offered midshipmen and the general public a glimpse into the past, present, and future of this elite community. In the end, however, this in-depth symposium accomplished much more than providing a cursory glance into the profession of the undersea warrior.

The symposium consisted of many activities open to both midshipmen and the general public. Civilian and military experts in both the submarine and diving fields were present to answer questions and discuss the future and past of their respective communities. On deck at the symposium, centered in Alumni

Hall, were members of the sunken submarine crew of the *USS Squalus* that sank in 1939. Survivors Carl Bryson, Carol H. Pierce, and Gerald McLees inspired the audience with their heroic tales of survival during this tragic event that plunged the vessel and its crew 243 feet below the surface of the water. The son and granddaughter of Naval Academy graduate LCDR Swede Momsen (USNA '20) were also present at the



MIDN 2/C Darren Bounds, Dr. Christian Lambersteren, and MIDN 2/C Rob Bocek

symposium. LCDR Momsen led the Navy Divers responsible for the rescue of the crewmembers. Peter Maas, author of the recent best seller *The Terrible Hours* which details the stories of the survivors and divers, also spoke to the midshipmen and civilians about the tragic event.

Others of note at the symposium were former astronaut CDR Scott Carpenter, who revolutionized deep-sea salvage diving and commercial offshore oil exploration, and Dr. Christian Lambersteren, who invented and used one of the first prototypes of the

self-contained closed circuit oxygen rebreathing apparatus. Ironically, Dr. Lambersteren and his assistant John Spence conducted their initial testing right here at the Academy in the pools of MacDonough Hall. Current active duty submariners and members of the Special Warfare community were also on-hand to provide midshipmen a first hand account of their experiences in their respective fields through numerous interactive demonstrations. The officers and crews of *USS Grasp* (ARS-51) and *USS Tornado* (PC 14), both moored along Dewey Seawall, opened their ships for tours in conjunction with the symposium.

The Naval Forces Under The Sea Symposium was an enlightening and eye-opening experience for all those who participated. It gave midshipmen a unique opportunity to learn more about the undersea warfare community's rich history and traditions and allowed them to see a glimpse into its future – a future that

many graduates of the Naval Academy will invariably become an integral part. As MIDN 2/C Darren Bounds, a member of the Naval Academy's Dive Unit, said of the symposium, "It was a great experience to meet people in the community responsible for its creation, and that in itself was inspiring."

The Naval Forces Under the Sea Symposium impressed upon midshipmen the importance of our naval history and traditions and the influence they have upon our future as naval officers.

The whole past is the procession of the present.

~ THOMAS CARLYLE ~

## Another Fine Mess

by MIDN Tom Cunningham, '01



Left leg. Right leg. I squeezed into my high-rise trou yet again and I remembered that I needed to check my tire pressure on my car. With the weather warming up, the likelihood of a blowout was higher. Looking at myself in the mirror, I feared another type of blowout. I loosened the top button and wrapped my cummerbund around my waist.

It was the Marine Corps Mess Night, and I, the soon to be inductee into the Jarhead fraternity, was compelled to attend.

Oh, we had heard the talk. The Marines cherish their traditions. The Corps worships ceremony. Blink wrong and you will be sneered at; cough with ill timing and you will be stripped of your commission and kicked down the steps of Memorial Hall by an irate Gunny while he douses you in lighter fluid, his cigarette dangling precariously through his maniacal laughter.

Or so we had been told.

Securing my clip-on bowtie and sucking my gut into my spine, I waddled across T-court to Dahlgren Hall for the "cocktail hour". I actually looked forward to this, as I felt that after a few refreshments I would feel more like a military man and less like a stuffed shrimp. Such is the benefit of the cocktail hour.

Upon arrival my senses were overloaded with the amount of gold and

silver and piping and shiny metal...Marines in a room are a collage of black and blue and scarlet hue...all surrounded by my wide-eyed classmates eagerly asking questions, prepared to stand for an hour in tight trou and fake ties. I made a beeline for the refreshments.

I didn't make it. A Captain (an O-3, mind you) stopped me, slapped me on the shoulder, and began talking about something. I don't remember who he was. We spoke for a good twenty minutes and I actually warmed up to the guy. He was really motivated that night.

At last I broke free. Nothing stood between the friendly King Hall worker serving refreshments and me as I strode confidently towards her. Nothing except time...

"Ten minute call!"

It was time to transfer to the dining room, a.k.a. Memorial Hall. The eager lady holding my beverage grinned at me as I looked at her hesitantly. Is it against the rules? Can I take this with me, or will I have to down it quickly? Will a swagger stick-wielding Staff NCO attack me? I decided to play it safe and I begrudgingly meandered my way to dinner.

Until this point I had been apprehensive about the whole "social" side of the Marine Corps, those nuances and peculiarities that make it uniquely alluring yet intimidating to Neanderthal Joe's like myself. I was nervous. All this went by the wayside, however, when I discovered what awaited me at my table.

Little Alpine chocolate mints. Two of them!! I could have flown to the moon. I showed them to Corporal Hicks, my neighbor at the table. He had some too.

I finally removed my eyes from my little treasures and looked around the room. It was beautiful...I realized all at once how regal the Marines could make an event. The chandeliers, the centerpieces, the uniforms,

the excited murmur...all these things alone wouldn't amount to much. But together, they were overwhelming in their majesty and I suddenly felt both humbled and elated at being part of something so much larger than myself. I was so awestruck that I ate both my mints without thought, balling the little green wrappers into my hand. No one attacked me. I was not set afire.

Colors were presented, toasts were made, and dinner was served. I had the pleasure of a Corporal and a Major, a classmate I knew well and one whom I did not sitting near me. All fears had disappeared, and as Major General Grinalds spoke about his love for the Marines, I looked around and could see the inspired faces of my classmates listening to an officer - a Marine - talk about the value of being a moral leader.

With all the pomp and circumstance of that night, and the irreverent celebration that followed in downtown Annapolis, the Marine Corps Mess Night embodied what the Academy has been teaching her midshipmen for decades: that we should be as well ladies and gentlemen of *"liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor."*

I look back with fond memories of that evening and am proud to be joining such an incredible fighting unit as the Marine Corps. Her traditions, ceremonies, and heritage create an aura of the near supernatural that many Marines cannot explain to outsiders, so I cherish this first glimpse into what is yet to come.

Semper Fidelis.



**Marines**  
*The Few. The Proud.*



## '51 - '01: Another Link In The Chain

by MIDN Anne Gibbon, '03



During the past few years, the Naval Academy has enhanced the connection between midshipmen and generations of graduates in order to imbue all who serve at USNA with a deep understanding and appreciation of our naval heritage. Perhaps the most interesting program involves those classes that graduated fifty years before the current group of first class midshipmen. These proud graduates return to USNA after 50 years of service to our country as naval officers and citizens in order to sponsor the current graduating class. With this sponsorship, the classes graduating five decades ago purchase mementos for their midshipmen, which are given during Plebe Summer and Commissioning Week.

Upon completion of Plebe Summer, the fourth class proudly march in their final summer parade before their parents, signifying their transition to midshipmen and the completion of this first stage of their Academy careers. Typically, the president of the class graduating 50 years prior will be in the re-

viewing party and will offer words of congratulation, encouragement, and a challenge to work hard during the four years ahead. Perhaps the most important words spoken by this proud graduate are the Navy Core Values - Honor, Courage, and Commitment. These same words are inscribed on the Honor Coin, received by midshipmen upon reaffirmation of the Honor Concept at the end of Plebe Summer. These core values define every midshipman's Academy experience and future service as an officer. Honor, courage, and commitment define what it takes to make it successfully to graduation day and later through life.

Nearly four years later, these same midshipmen who once stood on Worden Field frightened about the tough journey that lay ahead will stand confidently before their families on Graduation Day. As they walk from the stage at Memorial Stadium after receiving their diplomas, they will be greeted by a member of their sponsor class, who will congratulate every proud graduate while handing them their first pair of ensign or second lieutenant shoulder boards.



For the graduation of the Class of 2001, four distinguished graduates of the Class of 1951 shall be onhand to remind these newly commissioned officers of the legacy and honored traditions they have been entrusted to uphold. Admiral Kinnaid R. McKee, Vice Admiral Robert F. Dunn, Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III, and Vice Admiral Edward A. Burkhalter shall be present, forging a bond between the two classes.

As Commissioning Week approaches, the firsties think ahead to their futures in the Navy and Marine Corps. Once these young officers hit the Fleet, most days are too busy for reminiscing or idealistic thinking. The to-do lists are simply too long and more challenges exist than time enough to face them.

Every so often, when moving to a new command or while rummaging through old possessions, graduates of the Naval Academy may come across those mementos from their years at Annapolis. The gifts from a class 50 years apart from their own; that worn copy of Reef Points that somehow managed to survive Plebe Year in the pocket of those sweaty white works; the Honor Coin with the values that define our daily lives - Honor, Courage, and Commitment. And perhaps they may lay their hands upon that first pair of shoulder boards, reminding them of the greatest day of their young lives when they stood together under a sky of black and white covers amidst the legacy and the strength of those that have gone before.

## Grassroots Leadership at USNA

by MIDN Graham M. Plaster, '02

Beneath the granite walls of Bancroft a dormant hope awakes. The cynics claim that we live under the thumb of a bureaucratic juggernaut marked by chits, Form-2s, rules, and red tape. I believe otherwise, thanks to Mr. Mike Abrashoff (USNA '82). Through grassroots leadership the Naval Academy is, and will continue to be, a place where men and women learn to be servant leaders by placing ship and shipmate before self.

Mr. Abrashoff came to the Yard on April 25<sup>th</sup> to share his motivating and inspiring leadership vision with the Class of 2002. As the former Commanding Officer of *USS Benfold* (DDG-65), he exercised a unique leadership style that would become legendary throughout the Navy. His stories demonstrate that a leader's priority should be taking care of his or her crew. In a personal email to me following his lecture, Mr. Abrashoff explained, "I wanted to be the best CO that I could possibly be. I lived that 2 years with no regrets in how I treated my people AND created the most combat capable ship in the Pacific Fleet and quite possibly the entire navy at the time. I gave it my all."

"Grassroots leadership", as he calls it, is not a new idea. We are taught as plebes the nautical hierarchy of loyalty: **ship, shipmate, self**. However, truly living by this hierarchy is not easy. Abrashoff teaches ten principles

of grassroots leadership that remind us of the lessons we have learned and, perhaps, forgotten.

According to Mr. Abrashoff, the recent problems of retention in the Navy is a sign that grassroots leadership is not being implemented. Contrary to popular myth, he stated those who voluntarily leave the Navy are not always leaving for more money. The simple needs of respect, dignity and self-improvement are not being met, and therefore, sailors are looking



*Mr. Mike Abrashoff (USNA '82)*

elsewhere for work. As commanding officer of *Benfold*, Abrashoff realized he could attack and solve these problems. He began by personally interviewing each and every crewmember. He then used their ideas to improve



*USS Benfold (DDG-65) fires its five-inch 54-caliber MK45 gun.  
U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Felix Garza Jr.*

the ship and the working environment, while giving his sailors proper credit. The psychological result -- an increased sense of teamwork and mutual respect. The material result -- a ship that looked shockingly different than it had two years earlier. Abrashoff can boast: "*Benfold's* retention rate went from about 25% to 100% in 20 of the Navy's top three categories. Attrition went from more than 18% to less than 1%. Our mission degrading casualties went from 75 to 24. And during my final 12 months in command, we ran the ship on 75% of our operating budget, returning millions of dollars to the Navy."<sup>2</sup>

The Class of 2002 left Mahan Hall that evening with a renewed vision for servant leadership. Mr. Mike Abrashoff's example will live in us as we assume responsibility for the Brigade in the fall. We will remember that **to lead and to serve** are synonymous.

<sup>1</sup> [www.grassrootsleadership.com/principles/htm](http://www.grassrootsleadership.com/principles/htm)

<sup>2</sup> [www.grassrootsleadership.com](http://www.grassrootsleadership.com)

### *Principles of Grassroots Leadership<sup>1</sup>*

- |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Lead by example                 | • Don't stop at SOP         |
| • Communicate purpose and meaning | • Listen aggressively       |
| • Create a climate of trust       | • Strengthen others         |
| • Look for results, not salutes   | • Generate unity            |
| • Take calculated risks           | • Cultivate quality of life |

## A Trip To Colorado Springs

by MIDN Eliza Colquitt, '01

Nine motivated midshipmen traveled to the United States Air Force Academy to participate in the 8<sup>th</sup> annual National Character and Leadership Symposium. The title of this year's symposium, "Integrity First: Reflection, Inspiration and Aspiration," focused on the "Integrity of a Warrior's Honor."

Speakers from all parts of the country traveled to Colorado Springs to participate in this event. Noted men and women such as General Fogleman (U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff), Miss Angela Baraquio (Miss America 2001), and professional



Warrior Perspective" led by members of the Army Special Forces team. MIDN 1/C Kevin Brown represented USNA in his excellent presentation of the Samurai Warrior. He motivated the other student participants by donning full camouflage utilities, face paint included, while shouting a big "oohrah" to greet the crowd! MIDN 1/C Lou Evans also inspired the group through his impressive depiction of the true warrior nature of Marcus Aurelius.

The beautiful backdrop of the Air Force Academy, surrounded by a breath-taking vista of the massive Colorado Rockies, provided an excellent setting for the symposium. At the conclusion of the three day event, Brigadier General Malham M. Wakin, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), gave the keynote address and linked together lessons learned from the wide array of lectures. Brigadier General Wakin's inspiring commentary centered on the necessity of both personal and professional integrity. Military ethical conferences frequently focus primarily on the

necessity of integrity for the purpose of professional proficiency, but General Wakin stressed the importance of ethical behavior both at home and on the job. Personal and professional integrity contributes to the true meaning of integrity—the "wholeness" of a person.

The diversity of the speakers, the in-depth presentations, the intense discussions of integrity, and the enthusiastic participants all contributed to create an outstanding and unforgettable National Character and Leadership Symposium.



football star and 1988 U.S. Air Force Academy graduate Chad Hennings provided for an intensely diverse and interesting forum. Topics ranged from "Tragedy and Therapy," "The Integrity of A Warrior's Honor: An Artist's Perspective," "The Warrior's Code" (presented by Dr. Shannon French from USNA's Ethics Center), and "Integrity of a Warrior's Honor: The



## Friends For Life

by Mrs. Diane Green  
Director, USNA Publications Office



**M**IDN 1/C Jeffrey Greene of Springville, New York and MIDN 1/C James Tanyi of Akak-Manyu, Cameroon, West Africa: great friends, physics majors and graduates on May 25, 2001. Their friendship has sparked national interest for an international voyage. James' family has never been to the United States, but they are coming for Commissioning Week thanks to Jeff Greene's great idea and many members of the Class of 2001.

James had been saving money during all four years of his Academy life to bring his parents and brother to graduation. No stranger to saving money, it had taken James and his father almost six months to save \$45



*"The Tanyi Trot" starts at the Triton Light*

to allow James to take the SAT. Upon hearing about James' plan, classmate Jeff Greene came up with "The Tanyi Trot" to help James reach his goal. James and Jeff became close friends during a summer internship at Los Alamos Laboratories in New Mexico, but had been active together in community service projects for the Midshipman Action Group (MAG) since their early days at the Naval Academy.

On Saturday morning, March 31, Jeff, James and three friends set off from Triton Light to ride 92 miles to the Atlantic Ocean on a unicycle. The group would run while

Jeff took a break from the unicycle, and they had a sponsor's truck to follow behind them. Midshipmen had pledged so many cents per mile that members of the Brigade would contribute more than \$6,000 overall. It was a very long day, but they arrived at the ocean's edge around 10:30 p.m. Late at night as they climbed wearily in the truck, elated, they headed back to Annapolis.

In the meantime, as the five mids were beginning their journey from the Academy to the ocean, *The Baltimore Sun* ran a story about Jeff and James and "The Tanyi Trot". Suddenly the Naval Academy Duty Officer's phone began ringing off the hook. Theirs was a story that touched many hearts in the Annapolis-Baltimore-Washington area. Soon offers of money, assistance, services and food began pouring in and continued for the next three weeks. A generous total of \$13,000 was raised to assist in the noble cause.

This Commissioning Week, James will see his family for the first time in four years.

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